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Separation - A doctrine in need of reiteration Leviticus 20:1-8.

This is the substance of a message preached by Rev Ivan Foster on a recent visit to the Czech Republic and Romania.

Separation is no new doctrine. It is not the invention of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster or any other separated denomination.

You are not necessarily living a separated life just because you attend a separated church. There are many who attend services in a denomination which espouses a proper Biblical and separated position regarding the ecumenical movement and the worldly music that increasingly pervades the worship of many churches and yet they themselves do not embrace a holy separated walk with God. They are no more separated unto the Lord than was Judas Iscariot who was associated with the Lord Jesus during the most of His earthly ministry.

Biblical separation is not limited to denominational affiliations. It is a doctrine which impacts upon the whole man, the whole of our life and behaviour. It is to be sanctified or separated unto the service of God in all matters. You cannot be separated unto God while maintaining links with that which is in defiance of God.

It is the common position of those who are truly saved and obedient to the gospel of Christ. The ministry of the apostle Paul was detailed for him by the Saviour Himself in these words: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me," Acts 26:18.

Here in this chapter 20 of Leviticus we have clear teaching on separation, what it is and what it means for us.

Separation is, in essence, God's purpose for all of His people.

I. SEPARATION IS THE WORK OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE

"And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people. . . . And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine," Leviticus 20:23-24, 26. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance," Psalm 33:12. "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple," Psalm 65:4.

The purpose of God for His people is one of SEPARATION.

1. In eternity, God, in love, separated a people unto Himself. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," Ephesians 1:4. Here is where the separation of God's people from all other people began.

"Before the world in order stood,
Or earth received her frame"



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God separated a people unto Himself.

2. In time, God, by the convicting power of His Spirit begins to separate His elect through convincing them of sin. This was the first practical step in the outworking of God's purpose in the lives of His elect by His Spirit. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John 16:8. The working of the Holy Spirit in the convincing men of their sin is seen on the day of Pentecost. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2:37. These men knew themselves to be sinners as a result of the workings of the Holy Spirit within their hearts.

Here is how the Shorter Catechism states the matter.

Q31 : What is effectual calling?

A : Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

The Holy Spirit wonderfully enlightens the mind of the sinner in the knowledge of Christ, revealing to him his lost condition. "To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God," Acts 26:18.

He works the miracle of regeneration and imparts life to the dead soul. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh," Ezekiel 36:26.

The blessed Spirit draws the soul savingly to Christ. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John 6:44, 45.

3. Regeneration is an imparting of life to a sinner and a separating of him from his former deadness. "And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go," John 11:43-44.

4. By the grace of God the believer is daily separated from sin. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Romans 6:22.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God," Romans 12:2. "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father," Galatians 1:4. (See also Galatians 5:22-25.)

5. The final act of separation is our glorification. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Colossians 3:4.

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness," Psalm 17:15.

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Philippians 3:21.



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II. IT IS THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD THAT SANCTIFICATION IS ADVANCED IN THE BELIEVER

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. . . . And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth," John 17:17, 19.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified," Acts 20:32.

1. It is the Word of God that enables us to identify sin and thus avoid it. "And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you," Leviticus 20:8.

By the Word of God we discover what is :

Acceptable preaching. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures," 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. It must be "according to the scriptures." "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isaiah 8:20.

Acceptable praise. "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage," Psalm 119:54. Our praises unto God must likewise be "according to the scriptures." Today, there is an offering unto God of that which, like Cain's fruit of the ground, is deemed by men to be acceptable to God for it is to their pleasing, acceptable to their ears. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations," Psalm 89:1. The source for such a song must be the Word of God. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer," Psalm 19:14.

Acceptable worship. We cannot worship God while we maintain fellowship with that which is an offence to Him. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," Ephesians 5:11. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. . . . And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother," 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15.

2. We must read and apply God's Word daily. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night," Psalm 1:1-2.

3. It is a spiritual washing. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," Ephesians 5:26. It is a daily, indeed, a moment by moment experience. "Seeing ye have



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purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit . . .," 1 Peter 1:22.

III. THE SEPARATED LIFE BRINGS US REPROACH

1. It identifies us with the Lord. He is the object of men's reproach. "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth," Exodus 33:16.

2. Everything that is the Lord's, men despise. "But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself," Psalm 4:3. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Matthew 10:25.

3. The nearer we get to the cross the greater will be our reproach. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach," Hebrews 13:13. "Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used," Hebrews 10:33. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name," Acts 5:41.

The world ridicules and sneers at those who are different, but none more than the Christian. In order to avoid the reproaches of men there are those who avoid separating unto Christ. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God," John 12:42-43. This is the spirit which gained dominance over Peter for a time and which caused him to deny the Saviour, "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew," John 18:25-27. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly," Luke 22:61-62. Many have found that bitter tears are all that come from denying the Lord in order to escape reproach and gain men's favour.

IV. HOWEVER, OUR COMFORT AND JOY DEPEND UPON OUR SEPARATION

1. Holiness is the secret of joy. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful," Psalm 1:1. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," Psalm 16:11. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile," 1 Peter 3:10.

2. Sin offends God and brings His judgment. "Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out," Leviticus 20:22. (18:25, 28). "The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," Psalm 34:16.

3. Sin wounds the believer. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul," 1 Peter 2:11. "But they that will be rich fall into



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temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Timothy 6:9.

V. THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF THIS SEPARATION IS THAT WE MIGHT BE THE LORD'S

"And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine," Leviticus 20:26.

Separation is a surrendering unto the Lord to live according to His Word.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God," Romans 12:1-2. (Rom 6:13, 16, 19.)

I trust that these few words have indicated that "Separation" is no modern invention or innovation but is, in truth, the whole purpose of God for all His people.

Ivan Foster.
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